

SOCIOLOGY AT LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

60 years of Critical Inquiry and Community Engagement

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the LU60: Lakehead Sociology Newsletter, marking sixty years of sociology at Lakehead University. This special issue reviews, reflects upon, and celebrates the department's history, from its earliest beginnings in the 1960s to its continuing contributions to the university and the communities of Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

One of the department's first official acts was to establish sociology not only as an academic discipline, but as a practice of engagement. From its founding under Dr. Anita Beltran Chen, one of the first female academics at Lakehead, the department has built a tradition of teaching and research that bridges the classroom and community. Our students and faculty have studied and shaped life in the North—through research and teaching on health and inequality, activism around Canadianization, and collaborations that connect scholarship with the everyday realities of our region. Wherever there's been commitment to understand and improve northern life, sociology at Lakehead has been part of it.



As of 2025, the Department of Sociology continues to thrive. We welcome new cohorts of undergraduate and graduate students each year, and our courses and research programs in **rural and northern studies, health and medicine, social justice, and media and technology** remain vibrant and in demand. The department's legacy is not only one of scholarship, but of connection—linking past and present through mentorship, creativity, and community partnership.

--Dr. Chris Sanders

INSIDE THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Inside this issue, you'll find stories of trailblazing faculty and alumni, campus activism, unique northern research, and the many ways our graduates have gone on to make a difference in education, policy, healthcare, and beyond. Together, these stories remind us that sociology at Lakehead has always been more than a program—it's a way of seeing and shaping the world.

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Founding and Early Years

Sociology has been part of Lakehead University since its earliest days. In the 1960s, it was initially housed within the Department of Social Studies alongside economics, political science, and psychology. As the university expanded, sociology emerged as an independent discipline. By the mid-1960s, under the formative leadership of **Dr. Anita Beltran Chen**, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology was formally established. She was soon joined by colleagues including Dr. Cecil L. French, who would later serve as chair and help guide the department's continued growth through the late 1960s.



In addition to her pioneering role as founding chair, **Dr. Chen was an internationally trained sociologist recruited from the University of Chicago**, specializing in the sociology of health professions. She conducted some of the earliest research on nursing education in Canada and was instrumental in establishing Lakehead's **Gerontology program** and **Centre for Aging and Health Research**. Her dedication to interdisciplinary teaching and mentorship left an enduring mark on the department and university alike.

Lakehead's **Master of Arts in Sociology** program was formally introduced in **1974–75**, making it one of the university's earliest graduate programs. The department quickly became known for its engagement with northern, regional, and working-class issues—hallmarks that continue to shape its teaching and research today.

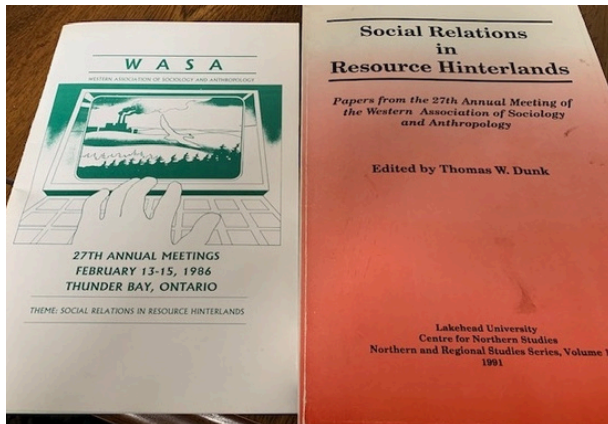
Early Faculty and Leadership

Among the first faculty members were **Dr. Anita Beltran Chen**, **Dr. Cecil French**, **Dr. J. David Martin**, **Dr. Raul Ruiperez**, **Dr. Gerd Schroeter**, **Mr. Alan Sparkes**, **Dr. James Stafford**, **Dr. J. Bruce Minore**, **Dr. Randle W. Nelsen**, and **Dr. David A. Nock**.

Dr. Chen, born in 1930 in the Philippines, moved to Thunder Bay in **1964** and became the department's founding chair. She was among the few female academics of her generation and the only woman in the department for many decades. As a sociologist and anthropologist, she established the department's intellectual foundations and interdisciplinary outlook, fostering a commitment to cultural understanding and social inquiry that continues to guide its work.

Dr. French succeeded her as chair by 1967, helping to consolidate the department during a period of rapid institutional growth. Subsequent leaders included **Dr. Jim Stafford**, **Dr. Raul Ruiperez**, and **Dr. Gerd Schroeter**, each contributing to the department's strong teaching culture and theoretical grounding. Faculty remembered Dr. Schroeter for his work on Weberian theory and his kindness to students, while Dr. Stafford and Dr. Ruiperez helped guide the department through years of steady growth and curricular innovation.

Later, **Dr. David Nock** chaired the department from **1983-86**, during which time he hosted the **27th Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Sociology and Anthropology (WASA)** in Thunder Bay. The conference's theme, "Social Relations in Resource Hinterlands," led to the edited volume *Social Relations in Resource Hinterlands*.



In the 1980s, **Dr. Thomas Dunk** joined the department, later serving as **Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**. His ethnographic work on working-class culture, particularly in It's a Working Man's Town, remains an important contribution to Canadian sociology.

Distinguished Scholars and Visitors

A highlight of the department's history was the appointment of **S.D. Clark**, often referred to as the "Dean of Canadian Sociology," who joined Lakehead as a visiting professor after his retirement from the University of Toronto. His presence in the late 1970s helped strengthen the graduate program and brought national attention to the department.

Memorable Moments

Lakehead's sociology department has never been short of drama or activism. In 1971, students staged a **30-day sit-in** protesting the dismissal of a sociology professor—one of the longest such protests in Canadian university history. A few years earlier in 1966, the university made headlines internationally when an **impostor posing as a psychology professor and head of both Sociology and Psychology** was exposed.

Students end 4-week sit-in at Lakehead

Special to The Globe and Mail
THUNDER BAY — Fifty people at Lakehead University agreed unanimously yesterday to end their four week sit-in at the university. The demonstrators said they were ending the sit-in "in the spirit of Easter and as a sign of good faith" that the administration will study a method for protecting the academic freedom of non-tenured faculty members.

The sit-in began March 16 in support of Victor Wightman, 43, an assistant professor of sociology, whose contract, which expires June 30, was not renewed.

The demonstrators, calling themselves the Students-for-Arbitration Committee, have demanded establishment of an appeals board to hear dismissal protestations by members of faculty who do not have tenure. The appeals board would have administration, student and faculty representation with an impartial chairman.

U.S. professors dodge our taxes, student says

Canadian Press
THUNDER BAY, Ont. — Visiting United States professors have charged the Canadian taxpayer out of millions of dollars, an Ontario government spokesman was told yesterday.

Dwaine Robinson, 31, a student at Lakehead University here, said the federal government continued to subsidize U.S. professors here with a taxpayer's money.

"None of those U.S. professors have taken the taxpayer's money on a student loan, having signed a statement stating that they will return to the U.S. after two years but then staying in," he said.

Mr. Robinson was one of

SOMA reopening demanded

The federal and provincial governments should have been more realistic in the way they handled the situation in the SOMA area, a student said yesterday.

The 11 million plant, owned by the provincially-controlled General Leavitt Corp., had been an economic mainstay since 1958 when it was imported from the Soviet Union.

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The department was also home to some of the earliest campus debates on **Canadianization** and the role of Canadian scholars in shaping curriculum and research. The "Canadianization movement" refers to a wave of activism during the late 1960s and early 1970s among university students and faculty across Canada—including at Lakehead University—who sought to "**Canadianize universities**. The movement at Lakehead reflected a local expression of a national **push for intellectual self-determination** to make Canadian universities serve Canadian communities, not just mirror foreign academic models. **Sociology students at Lakehead were among those who publicly advocated for Canadianization**, calling attention to the overrepresentation of foreign-trained faculty and the lack of northern and Indigenous content in university teaching.

Early Books & Scholarship

Sociology at Lakehead has long punched above its weight in research and publishing. Notable works include:

- **Randle W. Nelsen and David A. Nock**, eds. *Reading, Writing, and Riches: Education and the Socio-Economic Order in North America* (1978)
- **Randle W. Nelsen**, *Miseducating: Death of the Sensible* (1991)
- **Thomas W. Dunk**, *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (1991)
- **David A. Nock**, *A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy* (1988); *Star Wars in Canadian Sociology: Exploring the Social Construction of Knowledge* (1993)
- **Anita Beltran Chen**, *From Sunbelt to Snowbelt: Filipinos in Canada* (1998)
- **Gary Genosko, Félix Guattari**: *An Aberrant Introduction* (2002); *Punched Drunk: Alcohol, Surveillance, and the LCBO* (2009, with Scott Thompson)

The department also fostered early **Women's and Gender Studies** teaching at Lakehead—**Randle Nelsen and Sandra Steinhauser** co-taught Sociology of Sex Roles in **1978-79**, one of the university's first such courses.

Women, Gender & Health

Building on Dr. Chen's foundational work in health and gerontology, **Dr. Pamela Wakewich** advanced the department's strengths in gender, health, and community-based research during the 1990s and 2000s. She helped establish the **Sociology of Gender** and **Sociology of Health** course streams and co-founded Lakehead's **Women's Studies Program**, which continues today as part of the Department of Gender and Women's Studies. Her work helped institutionalize feminist and health sociology within the department's curriculum, ensuring these perspectives remain integral to Lakehead's teaching and graduate research.

Legacy & Community

Faculty such as **Dr. Bruce Minore**, founding director of the **Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research**, embodied the department's commitment to northern and community-based research. His work on improving health systems in northern and Indigenous communities remains foundational to ongoing research partnerships.

Among the department's many accomplished graduates are **Dr. Patricia McGuire**, an Anishinaabe researcher from Lake Nipigon and now a professor at Carleton University, and her daughter **Cora McGuire-Cyrette**, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Native Women's Association, both of whom earned sociology degrees at Lakehead. Their leadership exemplifies the department's ongoing impact across communities and generations.

Over the decades, the department's graduates have gone on to **diverse and influential careers in academia, healthcare, law, education, policy, social work, public service, and community leadership**—with some returning to Lakehead as faculty members. These pathways reflect the versatility and reach of a sociology education and continue a cycle of intellectual and civic engagement that has defined sociology at Lakehead for six decades.

To the Present: Sociology at LU Today

Sixty years after its founding, **Sociology at Lakehead University** remains a vibrant and evolving department rooted in the university's northern location and social mission. Today, our courses and programs emphasize **rural and northern studies, health and medicine, social justice, and media and technology**, reflecting both long-standing commitments to community-based learning and emerging global concerns. Undergraduate and graduate students alike explore the social forces that shape inequality, belonging, and change—locally, nationally, and internationally.

The department is home to a dedicated group of scholars and teachers whose research engages with northern development, Indigenous governance, healthcare systems, digital culture, and critical theory. **Dr. Chris Southcott**, who joined Lakehead in 1986, is the department's most senior member and a leading internationally renowned researcher on northern and Arctic communities. **Dr. Antony (Tony) Puddephatt**, who served as Department Chair from **2014 to 2023** and previously as Graduate Program Coordinator, is recognized as the department's **longest-serving chair**, and we thank him for his leadership and service.

The department currently includes eleven members whose administrative service, teaching, expansive research, and tireless efforts sustain our collective mission: **Walid Chahal, Laurie Forbes, Jianye Liu, Brian McMillan, Dalibor Mišina, Barbara Parker, Antony Puddephatt, Chris Sanders, Chris Southcott, Kevin Willison, and Karen Woychyshyn**. Our emeritus members include: **Randle Nelsen, David Nock, and Pamela Wakewich**.

Together, they embody the department's enduring commitment to understanding and transforming the social world through engaged teaching, critical inquiry, and collaboration with communities across Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

NEWS

Oct 28 **Dr. Chris Southcott - Arctic and Northern People are Fighting for Sustainable Communities.**

Oct 23 **Arctic and Northern People are Fighting for Sustainable Communities**

Dr. Chris Southcott Helps Northerners Build Futures on their Terms

May 8 **Congratulations Taylor!**

Feb 25 **Lakehead researchers awarded international research positions**

Critical work in Canada and other Arctic countries led to prestigious UArctic appointments



Left: Dr. Chris Southcott on UArctic research with Prince Albert II of Monaco

Trivia & Human Stories

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1966 113

PROBE OF TEACHER IS LINKED TO M. U.

References of Columbia Professor May Have Been Used

SEARCH ON IN ONTARIO

Man Is Sought to Answer Questions Since He Was Suspended

Fury William, Canada (AP)—He taught psychology at Lakehead University, he was president of the Thunder Bay Retarded Children's association. He worked with the Lakehead Alcohol Addiction Clinic in St. Joseph's hospital, rehabilitation center and was on the board of education. The man called himself David George MacDonald but he cannot be found to answer questions since his suspension as a psychology teacher at Lakehead University.

W. G. Tamblyn, university president, said he suspended MacDonald Monday after checking with various colleges and universities in the United States. MacDonald had listed the schools as references when he applied for his teaching post at Lakehead.

Letter From Missouri

Tamblyn said the university had received a letter January 21 from David George MacDonald, a psychology professor at the University of Missouri, in Columbia, Mo., from which the Lakehead MacDonald claimed to have been graduated. The letter asked Lakehead to investigate a possible fraud.

Professor MacDonald said in Columbia that a Dr. Fuch, secretary of the Ontario Psychological association, advised him in

December there was a possibility someone was impersonating him. The secretary had advised in the listing of the American Psychological association the similarity in the names and qualifications of the Missouri MacDonald and the Lakehead MacDonald.

Tamblyn said the university began an investigation and the results were sent to the crown attorney (prosecutor) January 23.

His Salary Was \$9,500

MacDonald, who taught at Lakehead for two and a half years, was associate professor of psychology at an annual salary of \$9,500. He joined Lakehead's faculty on a part-time basis in 1963 and as associate professor of psychology part-time basis in 1965 and assumed full-time teaching duties in 1966, although university officials said he was never a member of the permanent staff.

Tamblyn said he claimed degrees from universities in Missouri and Washington state some research he wrote several weeks ago in the president of Lakehead University, Port Arthur, Canada, where the Canadian MacDonald taught.

The Missouri psychologist received a bachelor of arts degree from M. U. in 1955 and a master of arts degree and a doctor of philosophy degree from Washington University, St. Louis, in 1957 and 1959. MacDonald said the Canadian professor claimed the same degrees from the same schools but at dates about three years later than his.

The Lakehead university calendar or bulletin does not list the dates of the degrees for the Canadian MacDonald.

The Lakehead university calendar lists its MacDonald as professor of psychology and chairman of the department of psychology and sociology.

"Either my degrees were forged or the university (Lakehead) did not get verification, but I really don't know," MacDonald said.

MacDonald added that the listing of his credentials was public information as he is in three directories of psychologists in this country. He added that this information therefore would be readily available to the Canadian MacDonald.

SOVIET BAY ICED IN

Traffic Is Unable to Move in Murmansk

Moscow (AP)—It was 36 degrees below zero in the northern port of Murmansk yesterday and the usually ice-free bay was covered with eight inches of ice. Tass said. The bay is warmed by the gulf stream and Tass said old timers never before have seen ships locked in ice.

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CANADA

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

PORT ARTHUR, ONTARIO

Applications to teach the following subjects in the Social Sciences and Humanities at the General and Honours level, and possibly also at the Master's level, should be addressed to G. O. Rothney, Dean of Arts:

Economics; English (Renaissance literature); Geography; History; Languages (preferably with ability to teach two of Finnish, German, Italian, Latin, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian); Linguistics; Political Science (including Public Administration); Psychology; Social Work; Sociology.

Applications should be accompanied by a curriculum vitae and the addresses of three referees. A recent photograph would be appreciated. Lectures commence September, 1967. Rank depends upon training and experience.

Minimum annual salaries: Lecturer—\$6,900; Assistant Professor—\$8,600; Associate Professor—\$10,800; Professor \$14,000. Annual increment \$300 (Lecturers) or \$400 (others). Teaching load nine to twelve hours a week.

Interviews will be arranged in Britain. Lakehead University (established 1965) is government-supported and a member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. It confers Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Arts and Science.

Applicants holding a post-graduate research degree will be given preference.

- The **"impostor professor"** of the 1960s remains one of Lakehead's most infamous stories, having been reported internationally in outlets such as *The Globe and Mail* and *The Kansas City Times*. In 2016, the story was later recounted in the documentary A.K.A. (2016) by Lakehead University history professor Dr. Ron Harpelle.
- The department's **early advertisements** in *The Observer* (London, UK, 1966) helped recruit some of its first faculty.
- Sociologists have long **engaged in public commentary**—Dr. Randle Nelsen's 1984 interview on "The Sociology of Boredom" in *The Hamilton Spectator* is a classic example of Lakehead's outreach beyond academia.
- Long before online learning, **Lakehead sociology faculty regularly travelled across Northwestern Ontario to teach in remote communities**. As **Dr. Laurie Forbes** recalls, these experiences sometimes came with surprises—classes that started an hour late due to time zone differences, impromptu community dinners, and invitations to stay with students for safety during winter travel. These stories reflect the department's enduring connection to the people and places of the North.
- In recent years, the department's **long-standing commitment to community engagement has taken new forms**—from our faculty partnering with northern organizations on issues like health equity and social justice, to our faculty and students conducting research in collaboration with local agencies. **Sociology's northern location continues to shape its character**, with fieldwork, community partnerships, and classroom discussions rooted in the lived realities of Northwestern Ontario.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward the next sixty years, the Department of Sociology remains committed to curiosity, collaboration, and critical inquiry. From our classrooms to communities across the North, sociology at Lakehead continues to ask meaningful questions, challenge assumptions, and inspire change.

None of this history—or the successes still to come—would be possible without our students, faculty, alumni, and community partners. Your creativity, compassion, and commitment have made sociology at Lakehead a vibrant home for learning, research, and engagement. Together, we look forward to the discoveries, conversations, and connections that will define the decades ahead.



In consultation: Jianye Liu, Sharon-Dale Stone, Tony Puddephatt, Deliber Milien, Pam Wakewich

Contact Us:

For program information, resources, and department news, please visit our website:
<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/programs/departments/sociology>

Problem kids bored, says prof

GUELPH — Every classroom has them — the kids who play hockey, talk at authority and take particular pleasure in hitting assorted objects across the room when the teacher's back is turned.

Chances are these students are just plain bored and are acting out their resentments against a school system bent on clearing out obedient numbers of the work force, says sociologist Randle Nelsen.

Mr. Nelsen, a professor at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, told a session of the Learning Society Conference yesterday the Canadian school system reinforces "deviant" behavior in some students by forcing them to control emotions and conform to a standardized mold.

"The authorities want to punish those who step out of line," Mr. Nelsen said. "These kids are making their boredom public and that reflects on the institution."

But instead of changing the institution, school officials label the students as troublemakers and try to alter their behavior, he said.

Jailed

"This attitude is evident in the move toward 'hardening' schools by designing concrete, fortress-like buildings with a few narrow windows, sometimes covered in bars to prevent vandalism, he said.

Students have even been jailed as punishment for truancy, said Mr. Nelsen. In 1981, 42 Toronto students were locked up in total of 100 days for skipping school, he said, adding there were no other charges against them.

Great changes are needed in the school system, which he said is primarily designed to train children to fit into corporate society.

"It teaches you to take orders. It prepares you for a white-collar bureaucracy where you're required to fall in line."

Mr. Nelsen said revamping the educational system to create community-based schools would help eliminate many causes of student boredom and rebellion.

Smaller schools run by communities rather than district school boards could tailor curriculum to individuals by employing local people knowledgeable in a particular field, he said.

"Who's better to teach a secretarial course than someone who's been a secretary for many years?"

However, in the existing educational system, qualified business people who could offer students a wealth of experience and practical training are not certified to teach, said Nelsen.

From Canadian Press

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to **Laurie Forbes, Randy Nelsen, David Nock, David Peerla, Chris Southcott, and Pam Wakewich** for their valuable insights, archival materials, and recollections that helped bring this departmental history to life. Their contributions have been instrumental in preserving and celebrating the legacy of sociology at Lakehead University.

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